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ABSTRACT

A majority of the Samoan students in Hawaii and the mainland United States come from American Samoa, but a small number are immigrants from western Samoa, which is geographically and politically separate. The culture of western Samoa is very traditional, and Samoan families are categorized as "extended." All children are expected to help with the family chores, and are taught to be obedient and to emulate their parents. In American Samoa, there are several consolidated elementary schools (which combine two or three of the old village schools), high schools, a vocational school, a community college, adult education, and a Bilingual-Bicultural project. English-speaking children attend the same schools, according to their residential locality. In Western Samoa, however, education is not compulsory, and the older children get, the less likely they are to continue their educations. At the primary level, most children attend village schools, which have a shortage of teachers and essentially no textbooks. Instruction is in Samoan, until Standard Level I (Grade 4) when the student is exposed to an all-English environment. Forms I through V correspond to Grades 9-12, and students at this level are either given vocational training or are prepared for university. When Samoans emigrate to Hawaii they often encounter problems with money, nutrition, school behavior, language and health. (KH)

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THE SAMOAN CHILD

In Samoa and in Hawaii

written by

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THERE ARE TWO SAMOAS

It is necessary to point out that there are two Samoas. Ethnically speaking, Samoans are the same people. They speak the same language and share the same customs and traditions, but American Samoa and Western Samoa are separate and different politically and geographically.

In all probability, a majority of the Samoan students in Hawaii and the Mainland will come from American Samoa. However, in the Windward Oahu schools, because of the assistance of the Mormon Church and employment there, a majority of the immigrant Samoan students may come from Western Samoa. Therefore, in the following discussion about Samoa, an equal amount of information will be presented, where relevant, to indicate where major differences appear between the two Samoas. Otherwise, a general fusion of information of both Samoas will be justifiable because of the fact that these people, American Samoans and Western Samoans, are actually one people.

Of the 14 volcanic tropical islands below the Equator, some 1,600 miles east and north of New Zealand and 2,200 miles southwest of Hawaii, six of these islands east of the longitute 170° W. constitute American Samoa. The capital of American Samoa is Pago Pago. It is under the sovereignty of the U.S.A. In November 1977, the people elected their own Governor for the first time after becoming a U.S. territory. It has a total of 76 square miles which is mostly mountainous. It has a population of approximately 30,000 people. The natives are U.S. nationals. Their government and educational system are patterned after those of the U.S.A.

The remaining eight islands of the Samoan archipelago make up the largest group, known as Western Samoa. It has a total land of 1,133 square miles and a population of 155,000 people. Western Samoa has substantial arable land. Its capital is Apia. Apia is 77 miles from Pago Pago, the capital of American Samoa. Western Samoa, formerly under Germany, then under New Zealand, has been an independent nation since 1952. Its government and education system are patterned much like the British system.

THE SAMOAN CHILD IN SAMOA

Traditional Samoan Lifestyle

A typical morning in old Samoa starts when the rooster crows before sunrise. Then the coconut leaf blinds of the fale are drawn up. Soon the insides of Samoan homes are completely visible. Young children arise and roll their sheets and pillows in their sleeping mats. The young boys go outside the yard to pick up the rubbish and the young girls would get breakfast ready.

When everyone is dressed for school and work, breakfast is served. It usually consists of hot cocoa or tea made from boiled orange tree leaves and leftovers from dinner. Sometimes it is hot rice porridge with coconut milk, or the popular Samoan pancakes, which are similar to malasadas.

Some of the familiar sights of old Samoa include young men with their colorful lavalavas out in the fields growing taro and bananas and gathering food crops. Another familiar sight in old Samoa is the young women carrying their laundry to the village stream. The beating of clothes on rocks with sticks can be heard, and clothes laid out over bushes and on the grass to dry in the sun typifies old Samoa.

In the evening, when the men return from the fields and from fishing and when the women have already cooked dinner, the family gather again in their fale to eat their meals and prepare for the night. The older children serve their parents and, in many families, the younger children eat with their parents.

Traditionally in Samoa, one person learns about another person by asking indirectly. No formal introductions are used.

If a person is not a chief, he is known by his first name. If he is a chief, he is addressed by his chief title.

Many times in Samoa, children are named to remind the family of a special event or to make sure the family name or title will be remembered. So many children born at Tripler Hospital may be named Tripler, or if a child's father is running as a district representative, the child may be named Representative or Rep for short. Some children have the same first and last name. In these cases, the children may have been named so that the family names will be spoken or called often in the child's lifetime; therefore, some children have names such as Alisa Alisa or Sami Sami. This is perfectly acceptable in Samoa, even in Samoa today.

Samoan ceremonies performed at weddings, funerals, and at an installation of a new chief entail long hours of eloquent speeches, masses of food being exchanged, and a viewing of lines and lines of mats and tapa cloths. These ceremonies are conducted by routines set in times past. They are executed and monitored by the old chiefs and learned by their new replacements, the young chiefs and chiefs-to-be.

Samoa of Today: Family and Home

The Samoan child is born into a family of about seven to twenty-two or more people. The extended family includes grandparents, uncles and aunties, parents, siblings, and many cousins. Although families in Samoa are categorized as extended families, the Samoan child usually recognizes his immediate family -- his biological parents and siblings. His upbringing may be in a nuclear family setting with frequent contact with relatives or may directly involve the extended fmaily.

Depending on the age and what position the child is in the family, the Samoan child is taught and expected to perfrom certain responsibilities. His age and number in the family determine his authority status, too. The older the child, the more responsibilities in the family and the more authority he has to act as surrogate parent to younger brothers and sisters and younger cousins. Boys are expected to learn quickly and obey all that their elders wish. Girls are expected to assist the boys in whatever chore they (boys) must perform, but their main responsibilities are to care for infants and to do household chores.

Children from about 3 - 4 years old to about 8 - 10 have the tasks of cleaning the yard, running errands for anyone older than they, and sometimes assisting older siblings with other chores. They follow and learn from the older children in the family.

At this age, when many youngsters want to verbalize and ask questons, they are taught not to speak unless spoken to. They are to obey adults and older children quietly. This is especially true when visitors come to visit the family.

Otherwise, parents do try to listen to their children. But the final word and decisions on matters concerning the child are made by the parents or anyone older who may be supervising the child.

The influence of a matai or chief on a Samoan child would be like a father-son influence. Girls are generally taught to emulate the fine qualities of their mothers, regardless of whether her father is a chief or not. If the child's father is a matai who provides service to higher ranking matai, then the child learns service through working and the teachings of his father. If the child's father is an orator, most likely he'll learn the skills involved in making beautiful speeches. The matai or chief of the family may or may not have a lot of personal contact with the child and like other adults of the family, he always has authority over the child.

Discipline is administered by any older member of the family to younger members. Depending on the nature of violation or wrong-doing, the punishment may include a scolding, a thump on the head, or a good thrashing with whatever is available (stick, belt, book, etc.). Physical punishment is not given with the intention of creating bodily harm, but to communicate that the child has stepped out of line. Samoans do not consider this disciplinary method as child abuse. Physical punishment is used to communicate that the child has done wrong and that the person giving the child punishment has the authority over the child.

Social activities for children in Samoa may include playing with brothers, sisters, cousins, and peers. Children in Samoa do not socialize with adults. Children socialize with children, adults socialize with adults in Samoa. Some of the activities for children in Samoa may include swimming, playing marbles, chasing master, and making toys from leaves, sticks, tin cans, old tires, and ropes.

Religion has been and is a very imprtant part of the Samoan life. Since the arrival of the missionaries in 1830, many of the compatible Samoan lifestyles have been strengthened by Christianity. Churches have provided diverse opportunities for Samoans to meet -- spiritually, physically, emotionally, and socially. Outside of the home, the Samoan child has been molded by his church. While schools provide opportunities for intellectual growth and development concerning matters of life on earth, churches provide spiritual activities to make life more meaningful.

The most predominant religious sect in Samoa is the Samoan Christian Congregational Church, formerly known as the London Missionary Society. The Catholics are the next largest group, followed by the Mormons and then the Methodists. Other newer religious faiths have penetrated the small island groups, such as the Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witness, Assembly of God, and the Bahai Faith.

It is evident in Hawaii and in the western coast of California that Samoans are perpetuating their religious beliefs through the erection of their church buildings.

Schools in American Samoa

Until the 1950's, Samoan children attended class in small village schools which were held in thatched roof huts. Schools then had no furniture nor blackboard, and teachers generally had only intermediate level of education. Classes were made up of children from seven to twelve years of age, and each child brought his own mat, paper, and pencil. In the small hut classroom, there were only a few old, out-of-print books, mostly Math and English, and the teacher spoke predominantly in Samoan to the students.

Today in Samoa, there are several consolidated elementary schools (two to three village schools combined). There are high schools, a vocational school, a community college, adult education, and even the Bilingual/ Bicultural project in its eleventh year of operation. People in Samoa have been "turned on" to education.

Children are served free hot lunches every day and are transported to and from school by bus. Whereas previously the children were required to wear uniforms every day, now they are encouraged, but not required, to wear uniforms only once or twice a week for the flag raising ceremony. Whereas English-speaking children used to attend a separate special public school (Fiailoa), now English-speaking children and Samoan-speaking children are required to attend the school in their residential locality.

Since the introduction of education television (ETV) in 1964, Samoan children have been exposed to English via TV, with educational viewing during the day and entertainment in the evening. The radio in Samoa is more bilingual than is ETV.

Grading is patterned after the A, B, C, D, F system. The school calendar is basically the same as the school calendar in Hawaii and other states.

It is the custom to address teachers and adults by their first name, but students generally address their teachers by whatever name, first name or surname, the teacher wishes and specifies.

As is the custom at home, Samoan children are expected to obey school authorities, recite their lessons, and not get out of line. The teacher is respected as the authority figure and, when warranted, may discipline children on behalf of the parents.

Although school policy now curtails teachers' administering physical punishment, many of the teachers feel this has led to a loss of discipline in the classroom.

Schools in Western Samoa

Education is not compulsory in Western Samoa because there is no direct government pressure such as fines or court action to enforce it. Besides that, there is always a shortage of teachers. In spite of that, however, about 95% of the children attend local primary schools, 60% continue into local secondary schools, and only about 200 or more enroll in technical schools or universities. In other words, as Western Samoan children get older, fewer of them are able to continue on to higher education; fewer of them can afford to go to school, and higher education schools can only accommodate a small number of students.

The child enters school at about 5½ to 7 years of age at a village school. The village provides the classroom, but there is a shortage of teachers. There are essentially no textbooks in the primary level (K-3). Instruction is all done in Samoan.

When the child completes Primers I, II, III (K-3 level), he is advanced to the Standard Levels I, II, III, IV (Grades 4, 5, 6, 7). In the Standard Level, he is exposed to an all-English school environment.

FORMS I and II (Grades 8 and 9) are crucial years for the Western Samoan child in school. The child is actively prepared for the secondary school entrance exam. Stress is given to learning Math and English. When he passes the exam, he enters a very competitive FORM III, IV, V, and then on to the university level. The student at this level either goes on to academic pursuits or gets a vocational training, or if he is unable to succeed in one of these -- and this is true for many -- they return to their families to farm the land.

Western Samoan schools have a different school calendar from American schools. They open in late January until May, and then a 3-week break is taken. Schools then reopen in mid-June and stay open until mid-September. The last school term begins from the middle of September until the middle of December.

In some areas, school buildings are crowded with poor lighting, inadequate seating, and poor acoustics. Some students sit on the floor during the whole class time. In some schools, there isn't any space for teachers -- they find space in the library to do all their preparations.

The Education Department of Western Samoa is in the process of rewriting and regoranizing its curriculum and school system. The department wants to be able to accommodate its large school-aged population (Western Samoa has one of the highest birthrates in the world), and it also wants to prepare the students who will work in Samoa with basic information and saleable skills.

Parent-School Relationship

Parents are usually not seen in the schools except for maybe three events in the school year:

1. When the Principal asks them to come because of problem children.
2. Open house celebration, when children put on songs and dances.
3. Small PTA gatherings.

Samoan parents usually do not vocalize any disagreement with the schools. They, more or less, let the school run its own affairs unless the school solicits their participation. An effort is now being made to encourage parents to become more actively involved with their children's education and school's activities.

The Child's Language

Because the Samoan child is often taken care of by his older siblings, the language he imitates is usually that which he has heard and learned from them. This is almost always the common everyday manner of speech and often includes a few vulgar words describing feces. Many times when a young Samoan child throws a tantrum, he repeatedly shouts what the Samoans call "pi" or the first bad word he has learned.

Diglossia, with most children, is considered a language for adults, although the necessary polite words are taught by elders in the home.

A majority of the Samoan children go to the pastor's school at about five years of age. They begin to learn to read and to write in Samoan, basically through the usage of the Bible. They learn to memorize and recite verses in proper Samoan. When they go home, the proper Samoan is dropped and they communicate in the common everyday manner. The pastor's Bible classes are held sparsely throughout the school year and then concentrates only during the summer. Its purpose is to teach Bible history and fundamental Math. It does not teach Samoan language, nor the grammar per se.

The everyday manner of Samoan speech is spoken by substituting sounds, with /t/ to /k/ and /n/ substituted by /ng/. For example, the word 'tina' (mother) would be said 'kiga" at home or when speaking with friends. When in church or in formal occasions, the word would be spoken as it is written, "tina".

The Samoan child quickly learns when to speak "proper" Samoan and when to be more at ease and use the everyday speech pattern.

Television has exposed children to English at a very early age. Not many studies have shown how much influence television has had on Samoan children. Samoan children watch ETV in school and for entertainment in the evenings at home. The only radio station there provides a more bilingual exposure. Movie theaters are becoming more and more popular with teenagers and young college students.

PROBLEMS WHICH (IMMIGRANT) SAMOANS OFTEN FACE IN HAWAII

Home Life

Depending on the skills his parents have learned in Samoa, a Samoan child may find himself living in low-rent, low-income housing. Many adult Samoans migrate from Samoa to find employment in unskilled to semi-skilled jobs. In short, any problem the family faces inevitably becomes a direct influence on and a problem for the child. Money is a major problem with many Samoans -- paying for rent, medical aid, and other essential items.

The traditional Samoan diet was very simple: meat and starch, coconut milk as sauce, and very little to no vegetables. Staple foods included taro, breadfruit, banana, yams, and sometimes sweet potatoes. Meats such as pork, chicken, and fish were very common, although in traditional Samoa, pork was eaten only on special occasions, and certain kinds and parts of the fish were reserved for ranking chiefs.

Young tummies were mostly filled with starch and half-ripened tropical fruits in season. Young taro tops cooked in a spinach-like style was about the only vegetable served and then only occasionally.

With the availability of things from the stores in Samoa, and more so in Hawaii, the Samoan diet has changed quite a bit. In Samoa today, the main staples also include rice. A popular food is New Zealand corn beef or "pisupo" and also salted beef. More of their favorite dishes now include a variety of vegetables and long rice.

Although many Samoans are eating balanced meals and teaching their children to eat the proper foods for good health, the change for many has been slow because of cost and palate orientation.

School

Whereas once the Samoan language was the main spoken language (that is, most of his classmates were Samoan, and his teacher a Samoan, too), the Samoan child now goes to school in Hawaii where his classmates speak anything from pidgin English or a very Ilokano-accented English to standard English by Haole or Oriental classroom teachers. He is expected to be very expressive and to show initiative. This might be something he may be able to cope with, or he may demonstrate his inability to cope by creating problems in class by displaying the following behaviors:

1. not paying attention
2. continually touching other students or properties
3. walking around and refusing to participate with others
4. frequent absenteeism

Language

Most Samoan children have been exposed to English, but they do not necessarily function comfortably in English. In other words, the Samoan child may understand what is going on, depending on his background and previous schooling in Samoa, but may not be able to express his own ideas in English.

Although currently English is the instructional language in the schools in American Samoa, students from Samoa use and depend on the Samoan language for most of their daily activities.

With a few exceptions, many Samoan students have difficulty pronouncing words with certain sounds which are not a part of the Samoan language. Instead of pronouncing the correct or expected sound in English, a Samoan student will often substitute a similar sound that is found in the Samoan language. The following chart may be useful in becoming more aware of these "problem" sounds and may be helpful when preparing to work with these target students in developing English proficiency.

Sounds which Samoan students have problems with	Examples of sounds found in English words	Native sounds which the speakers use to substitute for the correct English sounds
B	baby, bread, bye, bear	p - sounding like "papy, pread"
D	dog, daddy; tog	t - "tog, tatty"
G	good, go, give	k - "kood, ko, kif"
S - Z	position	s - "poshition"
C	cake, come; gate	ng - "gake, gum"
th	thing, birthday, with that, this	f - "fing, birftay, wif" d - "dat, dis"

Health, Attendance, and Parents

Some Samoan children may have health and hygiene problems such as sores, lice, and skin infections. In Samoa, the schools are serviced by the public health department. They make once-a-week visits to care for such problems. These health problems are common in Samoa. They are recognized, but not looked upon as major problems. In Hawaii, these problems are recognized and looked upon as major problems for children and parents to take care of.

Student attendance in school will vary, but generally Samoan parents stress that their children attend school. If this is not the case, then parents are probably not aware that their children are not in school. Samoan parents may appear to have communication problems because many are unable to communicate in English, or they may have problems finding transportation or directions to the school, or they may be working parents, as many are.

A common cold, running nose, and other communicable diseases are generally viewed as "things that will pass." Children with these communicable diseases are usually left unattended. The rationale is, "They won't die from it." These communicable diseases are not looked upon as urgent, requiring immediate follow-up and treatment. Serious illnesses in the family are taken care of by the women -- mother and older daughters. In many instances, when hospitalization is required, Samoan women are obliged to sleep in the hospital to assist the nurses and to meet every need of the ill member of the family. The hospitalized member of the family is attended to all day and all night.

ETHNICITY CONTINUUM

A Hypothetical View

The following chart is a hypothetical look at the movements of Samoans from one culture to another.

	Traditional	Transitional	Biethnic
Family Size	Large: extended	Large-med.: loose unit	Med - small: mobile
Economic	"Meager", land, sea	Low-upper low	Lower-upper middle
Language	Native	Pred. NL-functional Eng.	Bilingual
Education	None - very little	V. little - high school	Sp. trng.-higher Ed.
Values	Native culture perpetuation	Identity clarification	Bicultural-picks & chooses

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